

SUPPLEMENT

TO THE

NONCONFORMIST.

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GRATIS.

THE PLACE OF CONGREGATIONALISTS IN CHRISTENDOM AND IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH.

The above was the title of the inaugural address delivered yesterday at the annual meeting of the Congregational Union (reported elsewhere) by the Rev. John Kennedy, D.D., of Stepney. We are unable to report the address entire—indeed, it may be had complete in a separate form—but we will endeavour to indicate its principal points, and give a few illustrative extracts. The rev. Doctor began by justifying his choice of an ecclesiastical rather than a spiritual theme by the importance and urgency of the former. No one could deny the historical prominence of Congregationalists, whose spiritual ancestors took no mean part in those conflicts of thought, and in those civil strife, out of which our modern England has sprung. It is scarcely less obvious what Congregationalists are. They are non-Episcopal and non-established, but they claim to be orthodox Christians, and as to outward forms believe in baptism and the Lord's supper. Their ministers repudiate any claim to be priests, or to be in the unbroken apostolical succession, but they accept with thankfulness and reverence the Holy Scriptures of both Testaments as inspired of God, and bow to them, in no spirit of idolatry, as infallibly and sufficiently revealing God and teaching His will. In all this they are marvellously united. The fact was undeniable that they had attained a unity of judgment and practice which was in perfect contrast with the internal divisions of the Church of England, and not exceeded by the most homogeneous Presbyterian communion in the land. There were, of course, isolated cases of divergence, shades of opinion inevitable to free thought, and certain tendencies of evil omen which affect all parts of the Christian Church. Still, the hearty union of Congregationalists in faith and practice is a reality in which they had a right to rejoice. The speaker proceeded to say that in endeavouring to answer the question, "What is our place in Christendom and the Catholic Church?" he did not mean in quantity and proportion. It mattered not whether they were two, or two hundred, or two thousand. Their ecclesiastical position involved a certain amount of social disability and disrepute. But it was neither manly nor Christian to whine over the exclusiveness and superciliousness of certain classes of society towards them. Then their immediate relations to the Established Church of our country were more frequently antagonistic than friendly; for before the world they appeared, not as fellow-workers in promoting the highest interests of their common country, but as jealous rivals, often as bitter foes—the world seeing the worst of their relations to one another, and the worst often in its most exaggerated form. His question went deeper and was of wider scope. Had Congregationalists any place in the Catholic Church? Must they accept the position of Pariahs assigned to them by the adherents of the Papacy, and by many Anglicans as well? Unhesitatingly they would answer, No. Nor could they merely stand on the defensive. "We do not count it enough to meet and set aside the pretensions of those who would draw around the Catholic Church a line that should leave us outside; we assail the basis of these pretensions as unchristian and essentially schismatic." There are three communities which claim to belong to the true Church—the Anglican, the Roman, and the Greek Church. The Roman holds both the Anglican and the Greek Churches to be uncatholic, unapostolic, and schismatical—in fact, it claims to be the Catholic Church. The Greek Church, not so exclusive, still retorts upon the Roman that for a thousand years it has by an unwarrantable addition to the Nicene Creed placed itself in a condition of schism. As to the Anglican Church a very large proportion enjoys but denies its birthright, while the section which calls itself 'Catholic' is not the less confident in its assertion of the prerogative which is thus repudiated by a portion of its own brotherhood, and looks for the millennium of Christendom in the reunion of Anglican, Greek, and Roman. Rome repudiates reunion, which would

be a denying of herself in that which she regards as her very essence as the Catholic Church, ruled over by the visible representative of the invisible Lord of all. That in the face of these facts a sect of Englishmen in the English Church should dream of the reunion of what they consider the three branches of the Catholic Church is a great mystery. Dr. Kennedy proceeded to describe in detail what these three communities had in common which Congregationalists had not—their idea of the Episcopal office and function, which is sacerdotal; that their ministers are priests in the true sense of the word; and the doctrine of sacramental efficacy. This is a threefold cord, but it is easily broken, for each of the three doctrines may exist apart from the other two. The first is valued chiefly for the foundation which it is supposed to lay for the second and third, sacerdotalism and sacramentalism; so much so that it is not only lawful but a duty to resist bishops who do not believe that Christian ministers are priests, and that the sacraments possess a spiritual efficacy. "You may turn round on the very bishop through whom you have received the commission which makes you a true priest, and tell him that he is in a state of heresy. Should he deny that in ordaining you he bestowed priestly functions on you, and gave you the power of administering efficacious sacraments, you can tell him that he has done it notwithstanding, and that in his denial of his own great work he is next door to a heathen man and a publican." Those who accepted the essence of the so-called "Catholic" doctrine are the true Christendom—the true Catholic Church; and no others have a place within its holy orders, or share in its exalted privileges, either in time or in eternity. How should Congregationalists meet this tremendous theory? They believed in the Article of the Church of England, that "Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation," &c. But the Anglicans, with whom they had to do in this controversy, and had subscribed that Article, admit that their sacerdotal and sacramental principles are to be found but very obscurely, if at all, in the teachings of Christ recorded in the Gospels, or in the teachings of the apostles in their letters to the early churches. Indeed, the authority for these principles in Scripture is scant and feeble, for it could not be discovered from his writings that the Apostle Paul was a priest, or that our presbyters were priests; nor that baptism, or any other sacrament, was in any sense efficacious to the production of a spiritual life, or necessary to salvation. On the contrary, we should have accepted, as placed in the forefront of the apostolic faith, the abhorred doctrine which, in the hands of Luther, inflicted a wound on Popery which has not yet been healed. If Congregationalists took their stand alongside the first Roman Christians, would any one dare to say they were schismatical, and outside the pale of the Catholic Church because they believed what those Christians believed?

It is demanded of us by some that we accept the creeds and the decrees of the first six General Councils (the last of them in A.D. 881) as the complete exponent of the Unity of the Faith and the Constitution of the Catholic Church; while by others we are allowed to stop short 350 years earlier, at the Nicene period. But without asking what ground there is for ascribing a divine sanction to the Nicene period, or to the period which immediately preceded the separation of the Eastern and Western Churches, and denying it to later periods and the modern Papacy, we are entitled to take our stand where the Churches were in doctrine and polity when the Apostles finished their ministry, and to say,—Standing here we are sure to be right; at any later period we cannot be sure. As a mere question of probabilities, the chances are greatly in favour of this conclusion. We know what Paul was, in his personal purity and nobleness of character, and in the inspiration which gave his words authority; and we know what councils have been,—largely composed of the ungodliest of men, scenes of the lowest and most profligate intrigues, tools of princes and statesmen, and so tumultuous and stormy as to need the rude hand of barbaric Cæsars to preserve them from physical violence. And shall we be told that we come short of a true Catholicity, in fact of a true Christianity, if we do not pass from the teaching of the apostle to the teaching of such assemblies as these?

But they were told that there was an oral body of instruction, which was gradually reproduced in the writings of the fathers and councils which succeeded apostolic days. What was taught orally must have been in harmony with what was taught by letters. The oral Gospel could not have been another Gospel than the written. Yet they were required to accept sacerdotalism and sacramentalism, which did not find their roots in the practices or words of the Apostles, but in Jewish and Pagan

elements, the influence of which on Christian theology and ritual can be traced historically. To such a claim they could only boldly reply: "Paul we know, and Peter we know, and John we know, but who are ye?" The speaker proceeded to show that the doctrine of apostolical succession on which the other "Catholic" doctrines hung could be historically demonstrated to be a figment.

Now how stand the facts? The theory is, that the three orders of bishop, presbyter, and deacon, existed from the beginning. In great swelling words they are declared to be of divine and apostolic authority. And to meet the necessities of the theory they must be so. The bishop required by it is a bishop distinct from and superior to a presbyter, a bishop whose sole hand can impart a virtue and prerogative which the hands of a hundred presbyters cannot impart. If we cannot find such a bishop in the days of the apostles to connect the apostles with a bishop of the same order following after, we miss the first link of the chain that should convey apostolic virtue down to later times. Now such a bishop we cannot find. There is nothing more certain historically than that bishop and presbyter were one and the same in the apostolic churches. Their identity in the acts and in the writings of Paul does not admit of doubt or question. Even if we see in the "angels" of the Churches of Asia Minor in the last days of the last surviving apostle, the germ of an episcopate superior to the presbyterate—which we do not, by any necessity of interpretation—it would not meet the requirements of the Catholic theory. It would still remain in historical evidence that the bishops who were ordained by the apostles were simple presbyters, of whom for the most part there were more than one in every congregation, and who were successors to the apostles in no sense except in the way of coming after them and of preaching the same Christ to the world.

We find then a gap, a gulf rather, between the apostles and the first bishops of the only order capable of transmitting apostolic virtue.

Yet they were required to believe in this theory of apostolical succession, and all that it involved, on pain, aye, on pain of damnation! The vast Catholic pyramid had not an apex to stand on. It was a great castle built not even on air, but on nothing; and common sense and loyalty to the Great Master obliged them to resent such an imposition on their judgment and faith. The absurdity of the "Catholic" theory might be shown by applying a moral test.

The only tests supplied by Christ and His apostles were, personal holy character and abiding in the doctrine which they had divinely taught. Now we look down the ages which followed, and what do we find? Not forgetting for a moment the illustrious men of Christ-like character whose names are found in Church history, and the bright spots which relieve the terrible gloom of dark and miserable centuries, we find bishops and popes without number whose character was a scandal to humanity, whom even medieval historians describe as "the slaves of all vices," and whose life and doings could be accounted for only on the ironical or impious supposition that "Christ was then in a deep sleep in the vessel." . . . These wicked men, themselves to every good work reprobate, had power, we are to believe, not only to regenerate men's souls by baptism, to bring Christ from heaven into the bread and wine of the Eucharist, but to transmit the same power to others.

But this is but a small part of our *reductio ad absurdum*. The Christendom which enjoys the ministrations of the Anglican, Greek, and Roman Churches, has received a new spiritual life through the hands of apostolic priests. The adherents of the three Churches have been duly baptized, and, being baptized, are regenerate. Russia, then, is one great mass of regenerate men and women. Spain, Italy, France, are all regenerate. England is regenerate, one half of it at least, and that the half which comprehends, for the most part, the outcasts of our streets, the convicts of our gaols, the irreligious, who know no Sabbath but that of the idler or the drinker; aye, the very scorners and infidels of our land. In the wide Christendom which has received a new life in baptism, you will find thousands of scenes of which you may say, as you say of heathendom, "Every prospect pleases, and only man is vile"; and he is very vile. Where you should find those virtues and graces which are the fruits of the Spirit, you find only those vices and sins which are fruits of the flesh, regarding which it is authoritatively said, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. Now what can be the good of a new birth, a spiritual life, which leaves the man just as it found him? of a regeneration, notwithstanding which his heart, his lips, his hands, are characterised by the fruits of the flesh? Are we not shut up to the conclusion that it had no existence, that those who profess to impart it in baptism are under a delusion, and that those who believe they have received it are involved in the meshes of a fatal snare?

What renders the anomaly more unaccountable on the "Catholic" theory is, that those Divine fruits of which you cannot trace the faintest rudiments in masses of the apostolically-baptized, are often found in

* London: Hodder and Stoughton, Paternoster-row.

rich and beautiful profusion where no such baptism has been received. Preachers of the Divine word who make no claim to an apostolical succession, who even repudiate the claim as a superstitious fiction, go among savages and idolaters and proclaim the love of God in Christ. The Gospel they preach becomes the power of God to the renewing of the heart and the purifying of the life. Those very changes are wrought which were effected by the preaching of the apostles in the first age. Men are turned from dumb idols to serve the living and true God. Tribes more degraded than any Scythian to whom inspired men ministered, arise out of their low estate and regain their lost manhood. Peoples sunk in a deeper than Corinthian vileness are washed as were Corinthians of old, from the filth in which they wallowed. Where the works of the devil were wrought boldly and shamelessly, you will find many who have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts, and whose walk in the Spirit is attested by their long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, meekness, and temperance. Give the darkest colouring you can to evils which survive these transformations, the churches of the primitive age were imperfect likewise. But with all the shading which truth requires, we can appeal to many isles of the Pacific, to the frozen shores of Greenland and Labrador, to Christian churches in India and China, where, without the supposed virtue of apostolical succession, and without the alleged power of a duly-administered baptism, great multitudes have been turned from darkness to light, and live before God and man clothed in the beauties of holiness; the seal of the true apostolicity of the faithful men who, without Episcopal ordination, have preached the word and administered Christian ordinances. . . . The Christianity of our missionary churches is the very image of the Christianity of the missionary churches of apostolic times; not an imperfect and maimed Christianity that should leave them outside the pale of Christendom, an excrescence and a mystery.

It came to this, that the homes of the one class are often like the lairs of wild beasts, and yet they are Christian! the homes of the other are often the abodes of a Christ-like love and virtue, and yet they are not Christian! Such was the logical consequence of the "Catholic" theory. A further objection to it is the terrible uncertainty in which it involves us as to our spiritual condition. What are the Christian graces and goodness of those to whom the clergy minister, if they have not been duly engrafted into Christ and His Body, the Church, by sacraments validly administered by a validly-ordained priest? And how shall they attain certainty as to this valid administration and this valid ordination? All the archeologists in the world cannot give it. A man might know that he had the faith which worketh by love, but he could never know whether the hands which baptized him were duly qualified. The ecclesiastical position of Congregationalists is not of accident nor of tradition, nor of perverseness and wilfulness. It is founded on very deep convictions touching things of most vital moment; and in the interests of truth and spirituality and freedom, they resisted these pretensions of Anglican, and Greek, and Roman, and maintained that what those Churches regarded as their common inheritance was in the words of one of themselves, "only a fiction invented and propagated in the Church to bolster up a sacerdotal superstition." In search of the principles of a true Catholicity, they went back to the age when the Churches of Christ were under the immediate guidance of living inspired men, who taught that the Church had one invisible Head, "from whom the whole body, fitly joined together, and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body to the building up of itself in love." The oneness of the Church as described by the Apostles was not an organic unity. The churches were separate societies scattered over many lands, living amidst alien and hostile nations, with no visible head, and no visible bond of connection, no organic unity, and no power—no easily-discoverable power at least—to subdue unruliness, and, at the best, only "knit together in love." Yet it was in those early Churches, whose constitution was so simple, whose government so impalpable, and which were knit together only by the bonds of mutual confidence and love, that they found the Divine ideal of the kingdom of Christ.

The living and glorified Christ was the Sun whence came, without the mediation of priest or patriarch, the light of life to the first Churches, and whose attraction retained them in their proper relations both to Himself and to one another. And this ordinance of the spiritual universe, mighty in its action, and silent and unobtrusive in its manner, like the ordinance which binds the orbs of the solar system into one, is not capable of improvement by human device or artifice, and will outlive all the forms and contrivances by which the ambitions and the foolishnesses of men have laboured to effect an end for which Divine wisdom has already made ample provision.

Moreover, this idea of a true Catholicity gave the man immense advantage in interpreting the past, in judging the present, and in anticipating the future. They could not accept the Christendom of the Mediæval ages as a mirror of the Gospel. If Christianity had not been a divine and immortal thing, as had been well said, it could not have survived the outrage done to it by many generations of its own adherents. Still they were the heirs of the past, according to the true doctrine of development. Even in the records of the Primitive Church they found truth and error, good and evil, already contending for the mastery, though the good seed of the kingdom was there. But the apostles knew and foretold what should be the final issue of the great conflict, though they predicted a falling away of the Christian Church. This was only a part of the great mystery of evil which confronted them everywhere. They could not doubt that, even as the millenniums, which

preceded the Incarnation, were not accidental but preparative, so all the centuries of the anti-Christian apostasy would be found to have important bearings—which they could now but partially appreciate—on the future triumph of the kingdom of truth. At all events, it was plain that there was no *a priori* reason why they should regard themselves as shut up to the conclusion that the Christendom of the Middle Ages was the proper and normal development of the Church of the First Ages. They were not required to see nothing but evil in the ages of the supremacy of the so-called Catholic Church. They found the true Church wherever they found the truth. The spiritual man, in the worst organism, was a member of Christ and of His body; the unspiritual man, in the best, was neither the one nor the other. Without, however, making light of honest endeavours to lessen or heal organic differences, they were disposed to consider, with all candour, the appeals which came to us from Church congresses on the restoration of the Nonconformists to Communion of the Church of England:—

It is very seldom, however, that we find our brethren discussing this question with any apprehension of its true conditions; they ignore the fact that, with many, the connection of the Church with the State is itself a sufficient ground of separation, and that their return is impossible so long as that connection lasts; that with others, Episcopacy is a sufficient ground of separation, and that these could not return to it even if its connection with the State was dissolved; that with others, the sacramental system of its ritual and formularies is a sufficient ground of separation, and that without a radical reform in an evangelical direction, these could not return; that with others, a state of communion which "comprehends" a Romish ritual and doctrine on the one hand, and the broadest rationalism on the other, is a sufficient ground of separation, and to these, with their present light and conscience, a return to the Church of England is simply impossible.

Our brethren do not grapple with these fundamental difficulties in the way of organic unity with Evangelical Nonconformists. Sometimes they look on us as offenders against their Church, whom they may win with kind and forgiving words, in which they assure us of a welcome to our injured home; sometimes as sulky children who have taken offence for very little reason, and who may be coaxed back by expostulation and by some concession to our weakness and bad temper; sometimes as labouring under what Dean Stanley calls a "long hereditary exasperation," which the legislation of the last thirty years should allay, and to which, if we would quit us like men, we should show our superiority, by abandoning our traditional schism. But no overtures made on such grounds as these, go to the root of the matter.

Now if we feel all this strongly, and if, in addition to more general or abstract reasons for separating the Church from the State, we are moved by the consideration that the wealth and prestige of the Establishment are now in very large measure perverted to further the most determined effort which these three centuries have seen to reconvert England to Rome, let our brethren bear with us. Strong feelings and strong words in dealing with such a theme, and in fulfilling the duty which such a national crisis demands, surely need no apology. At least they lean to virtue's side. Let our brethren only appreciate our position, and even if they do not accept our conclusions, they will not fail to be true to their own deepest faith in our common Christianity and in our common standing as servants of the same Lord. I ask this in the interests of the true Catholicity which we oppose to the false Catholicity of Anglicanism and Romanism.

Nearly allied to the prejudice or superstition of which Evangelical clergymen find it so difficult to rid themselves, that episcopal ordination has a sanctity and value which non-episcopal ordination does not possess, is the prejudice or superstition which finds expression in a dread lest their church should sink down into a *sect*. Now, what does this mean? Have they after all, as a religious community, virtues and prerogatives which other religious communities do not possess? What is "sect" but "section" written small? And what is a section of anything but a part? The Church of England must be either the whole, or a part, of the Church of Christ in these realms. That it is not the whole, our Evangelical brethren confess and even maintain. Then it must be a part, a section, a *sect*. We object as much as they to what is offensive in the use of the word. We do not submit, any more than they, to any imputation of narrowness, or meanness, or bigotry. But a *sect* we are, of necessity and mathematically, unless we are the whole.

Turning to the non-episcopal communities, were they not the regiments in one army whose first duty was to labour after internal soundness and efficiency, whose second was in the day of battle to forget separate interests in devotion to the common cause?

Neither Congregationalists nor Presbyterians nor Methodists have a monopoly of the Divine blessing, nor have they or their systems a monopoly of wisdom; and to shut up themselves within themselves and refuse to be taught by one another, will most surely bring upon them the natural penalty of selfishness, the crippling and stiffening of their energies. Our denominations should further realise in all their actions that they are but parts of a great whole, which exists for one great end. No truly Christian man can forget this. But corporations or communities may become so absorbed in their zeal for what they consider their own interests, as practically to forget that other communities exist and are labouring for the same spiritual end. And they need to be "pulled up" in their career of self-aggrandisement, by being reminded that they are not the Church of God; but only a part of it. "Christ is not divided."

Dr. Kennedy went on to express his satisfaction and hopefulness at the recent attempt of the Congregational Union to bring the representatives of all non-episcopal churches face to face, with a view to a better mutual understanding in their Christian labours. Little apparent success resulted from this experiment. What then?—

The grand music of the cathedral choir is preceded

by not a little discord in previous practisings and rehearsals. No great building is ever raised without noise and dust and ungainly scaffolding. Where there are earnest minds, and tender consciences, and diverse judgments, to say nothing of small prejudices and sectarian jealousies, the object which this union submitted to the recent conference could not even be approached without considerable hesitation and confusion. But a good beginning has been made. And I for one hope that I shall see the day when our evangelical denominations will not only study each others' rights and interests, but will, in addition to their deliberations in their own council-chambers, consent to meet as equals and brethren to take common counsel touching the best methods of promoting the Kingdom of Our Lord and Saviour. Such an Evangelical Alliance for work will be a sure outward sign of the inward grace of a true Catholicity. The policy of "Every man for himself" is not of God. It is schismatic and suicidal.

In conclusion, the Chairman referred to the future. Unless he doubted the truth and power of God he could not doubt that the world was destined to see a true Christendom, as different from the Mediæval Christendom as light is from darkness.

Of the moulds into which the Churches and States of the future shall be cast, we do not speculate. Only this—the dream of an organic unity will be dreamed no more. If Episcopacy shall survive, the bishop will be the father, not the lord of his flock. If Presbytery shall survive, its claims of authority will be relaxed into more consistency with the freedom and manhood of the Christian people. If Congregationalism shall survive, it will be less chargeable with anarchical tendencies, and will not spurn the restraints that are needful in the interests of order and union. The lines which separate these distinctive forms of Government will be less hard and fast than they are now. They will shade off into each other, so that spiritual tyranny will be no longer chargeable against one, or spiritual disorder against another. Freedom, truth, and order will be the characteristic and the stability of the new times that are coming.

But in those new times I find no place for the Pope. The great fabric of which he is the head, is now so consolidated and stamped with immutability, that it cannot be reformed, it must be broken in pieces. That the Pope will die hard is certain. But die he must. The mystery of iniquity has had a long reign, and may have a longer. But in the end it will be consumed with the spirit of the Lord's mouth, and destroyed with the brightness of His coming.

Nor will the new Christendom be governed by a visible Christ enthroned in Jerusalem. The "expediency" of the Lord's departure has not ceased, and will not, until the period of change and conversion shall end and give place to the hour of final judgment. But the real and mighty presence of Christ in the world will be gloriously manifested—not in pretentious priesthoods and spiritual princedoms, but in the personal enlightenment and sanctity and elevation of the nations. The Ten Commandments will be engraven on the souls of men. The ethics of the Sermon on the Mount will be not the admiration of moralists, who mourn that they are too ethereal and unearthly, but the very law of the heart and life of the peoples of all lands. The fruits of the Spirit, in all righteousness and goodness, will no longer be confined to select Christians struggling hard to maintain them in an ungenial atmosphere, or to sickly monks nursing their feeble piety in solitude; they will abound on the most exposed branches of society, and prosper among the masses of mankind as the fruits of the flesh do now—all which we learn, not from the leaves of the Sibyl, but from the Word of God. And in the faith of it we pray in the words of our own Milton:—"Come forth out of Thy royal chambers, O Prince of all the Kings of the earth! Put on the robes of Thy Imperial Majesty, take up that unlimited sceptre which Thy Almighty Father hath bequeathed Thee; for now the voice of Thy Bride calls Thee, and all creatures sigh to be renewed."

SUNDAY SCHOOL UNION.

The annual conference of the committee of the Sunday School Union with the representatives of country unions was held in the Lecture Hall, Old Bailey. The conference was preceded by a prayer-meeting, presided over by the Rev. Dr. Rigg. Some fifty country unions were represented, and there were present also distinguished visitors from America, Germany, France, Italy, Holland, and Tasmania. Mr. D. Pratt (the chairman of the committee) presided. The subject for discussion was—"Week-day Effort in its Relation to Sunday-school Labour," introduced by Mr. R. Butcher, of Bury. Among others the conference was addressed by Mr. C. Reed, M.P.; Mr. H. Jones (Blackheath), Mr. Pallett (Rochdale), Mr. Pickford (Ipswich), Mr. W. H. Groser, B.Sc.; Mr. Waddington (Kettering), Mr. J. S. Featherstone (St. Mary Cray), Mr. T. J. Cox, Rev. Dr. Tyng (U.S.), Rev. J. Ellis, Mr. S. J. Johnson (Thame), Mr. Joseph Gould, (Bristol), Mr. E. Thomas (Bradford), Mr. J. Stewart (Hastings), Mr. G. N. Ford (Manchester), Mr. J. J. Preston (Leicester), Rev. Dr. Procknow (Berlin), Rev. Mr. Scheltema (Amsterdam), Mr. Edward Wood (Nottingham), Mr. Wm. Hall Derby, Mr. Lawson, Mr. O. Swallow (Manchester), Mr. Charles Swallow (Manchester), Mr. J. R. Moore (Chester), Mr. J. C. Stevenson, M.P. (South Shields), and Mr. F. J. Hartley. A conference was held in the afternoon to receive reports from the country unions.

The public meeting was held in Exeter Hall at six o'clock on Thursday evening. Every part of the building was crowded, and some hundreds were unable to obtain admission. On the platform there was a large array of influential gentlemen. The Earl of Shaftesbury presided. Immediately on his left was the Rev. Dr. Tyng, of America. The opening prayer was offered by the Rev. Dr. McAUSLANE.

Mr. AUGUSTUS F. BENHAM read the report, which referred to the growing operations of the committee

on the continent of Europe. The Sunday-school Society of France had been enabled to liquidate a debt of 720*l*. From Switzerland there were encouraging reports of Sunday-school progress, and stimulus had been given to the work in Germany. In Saxony, where it was formerly prohibited, it has gained a secure and promising position. At Rome the school under Mrs. Gould's care numbers 120 scholars, and is protected by the authorities against the efforts of the Popish clergy. Other schools are about to be formed in Rome: and in Florence a Sunday-school magazine has been commenced. The reports from the colonies were also of a cheering character. A great Sunday-school convention, presided over by the Lieutenant-Governor, had been held at St. John's, New Brunswick. Among the home operations, reference was made to the address presented to the Queen and the Prince of Wales on the occasion of the National Thanksgiving. The teachers' examination in January had been signally successful. No less than 643 candidates were examined simultaneously in London and forty-four other cities and towns; of these 570 passed in one or more of the subjects, while 346 passed in all, and became entitled to the preliminary certificate. Various examinations of Sunday-schools had been held under the auspices of the London auxiliaries and county unions. The committee proposed to hold a central examination for scholars who had passed the senior local examinations in the metropolis. The connected schools in town and country again exhibit an increase, and include twelve metropolitan auxiliaries with 775 schools, 17,210 teachers, and 157,929 scholars; 172 country unions, with 5,372 schools, 76,097 teachers, and 629,750 scholars; being an increase of one union, 109 schools, 2,547 teachers, and 59,978 scholars. The increase in the London auxiliaries about kept pace with the growth of the population. Eighty-three per cent. of the teachers connected with the London auxiliaries, and 71 per cent. of those belonging to the country unions, are members of Christian churches; while 78 per cent. of the metropolitan teachers and 85 per cent. of the country teachers were formerly Sunday-schoolers. The returns as to morning attendance still show a downward tendency. The proportion of scholars in senior and infant classes is about the same as last year. The number of scholars in the London schools who are reported to have joined Christian churches during the year is 1,862, and in the country schools 6,794, making a total of 8,656, being an increase of 615 over the numbers reported last year, and amounting to about one per cent. of the entire number of scholars in the connected schools.

The Noble CHAIRMAN, in his opening speech, said that the committee had desired that the question which was agitating the public mind as to the teaching of the Bible, or the exclusion of it from the rate-sustained and rate-aided schools, should be altogether tabooed this evening. (Loud cries of "Hear, hear," and applause.) Well, it was far easier to say nothing than to make a speech under close restraint. He could only say to all present that he loved and respected them from the very bottom of his soul, and most heartily prayed that the blessing of God would rest upon their endeavours. Sure he was that their energies, prayers, and labours were indispensable to the temporal and eternal welfare of millions of the British people. (Loud cheers.)

The Rev. WILLIAM BRADEN, of the Weigh House Chapel, moved that the meeting rejoiced at the evidence presented that the Sunday-school system, which had conferred such signal blessings on the youth of this country, was making rapid progress on the continent and in the British colonies, and that the value and importance of the assistance afforded by the Union for the promotion of this great object were increasingly manifested, and it encouraged the committee to persevere in their appeals for pecuniary help so urgently needed to meet the augmented demands on the funds of the Union. He urged that the Sunday-school system was justified by its works, that it was a great check to the growth of infidelity and superstition, and that if it was adopted all over the world it would materially insure the continuance of peace among nations. He also referred to the formation of a Bible society and the foundation of a Sunday-school within the very walls of Rome. Let a voice of encouragement go forth from the immense gathering—a voice full of brotherly sympathy, in which the tones of love and prayer mingle together, a voice which reached across the intervening waters, and let them say to their fellow-workers, "God speed you, brave brothers! God speed you, noble-hearted sisters! Our son's desire responds to yours. 'Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might.' Teach Christ faithfully, diligently, lovingly. Now is your time of labour; now you go forth even weeping, but bearing precious seed; but you will come again from the harvest-fields, rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you; and in that day you and we, entering the Father's home of rest, shall rejoice together." (Loud and prolonged cheers.)

The Rev. Dr. PROCKNOW, a Lutheran clergyman, secretary of the Berlin Sunday-school Union, and editor of two Sunday-school German publications, in seconding the resolution, mentioned that they had in Berlin twenty-four Sunday-schools, with 500 male and female teachers, and 7,000 children.

The Rev. Dr. TYNG, of America, in rising to propose the second resolution, said he had too received a similar intimation to that to which the chairman had alluded, but he could not speak if any limitation was put upon him. He was about to sit down when he was met with cries of "Go on, go on." Mr.

GROSER one of the secretaries, rose to explain that no such intimation was sent to Dr. Tyng by the committee, and that they would never have thought of adopting such a course towards a gentleman coming to them from their brethren in the United States. Lord SHAFTESBURY rose to explain that he was the person who had shown to his reverend friend the resolution come to by the committee, and that the misapprehension arose in this way. Dr. Tyng was then requested to proceed with his address without any restraint. He took advantage of the permission, and in a free-and-easy manner, abounding with much humour, explained his views as to the importance of Sunday-schools, and of the increased value of the instruction given therein, where the Bible was used without catechism or formulas of any sort. The Earl of SHAFTESBURY here intimated that he had other engagements which he was obliged to fulfil, and would resign the chair to Mr. Reed, M.P. The Rev. Dr. Tyng left with his lordship.

The Rev. L. L. BEVAN, in seconding the resolution, said that Dr. Tyng, who had just left, seemed to have entirely misunderstood the reason for the resolution which the committee had adopted. There was at present a division of opinion in a party which had been usually very united, in regard to the use of the Bible in rate-aided schools. There were some who wished to keep the Bible out of those schools, and some who wished to admit it, but all must agree that the platform of the Sunday School Union would not be suitable ground for the discussion of any political question. (Cheers.) Mr. Bevan, in an earnest address, urged the importance of teachers availing themselves of every opportunity for improvement, so as to keep pace with the increasing intelligence of their scholars.

The Rev. ARTHUR MURRELL proposed the third resolution in a long and characteristic speech which was much applauded. He concluded as follows:—

You Sunday-school teachers have not stirring and exciting tales to tell us. Our missionary platforms ring with adventure, and seem warm with a tropic glow, and fragrant with the spices of "Araby the blest." A halo of romance seems to rest over the speaker, and invest him with a charm. But the associations we connect with you and with your work are the prosaic school-room, the jargon and the noise, and the hard back bench of a church or chapel gallery, while the awful service is got through: We like to come to Exeter Hall to hear of discovery, and adventure, and of exciting scenes. I trust the time may even yet come round when the feet of David Livingstone—(loud applause)—shall stand upon these boards, and we shall hear of new tracts discovered in the wilds of Africa. But it is not given to you to tell of hairbreadth escapes and of deeds of heroism by flood and field. You have, it must be owned, a dullish budget to rehearse. You could talk of blank faces, of listless classes, of unruly children. But there's nothing romantic about that. The poetry of the nursery is too homely to be popular. But you can tell that, which if it fails to evoke wonder and applause, must call forth from Christian hearts the better answer of gratitude to God. For you can tell of how the work, at first so heavy, grew gradually lighter. You can tell of how you watched the lamp of intelligence gently sparkling and beaming in eyes that had been dull. You can trace the spreading of a twilight over the prospect, and its mellowing into morning, through your class. And you can say that it was because you went home and prayed for them. (Cheers.) You can tell of how one and another came to call Jesus Saviour, all because you prayed for them—because, in the words of the resolution I hold, you "united fervent prayer with earnest labour." Yours may be a tame tale, but it is more credible and real for all that. There was a party of adventurers climbed up Mont Blanc at a late and stormy season of the year, and fearing that the exploit would not be credited, they brought down with them the flag which a party had planted on the top a month before, and the handkerchief of a hapless climber who had been lost among the snow. They felt that simple credentials such as these would be more convincing, if less exciting, than thrilling accounts of dangers escaped, and difficulties conquered. And so with you. You can point to simple proof of your ascent into the mount of achievement and prayer, for it is a climb, and a noble one. May God grant you to gather many a trophy of success, till you come with your charge into His presence with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you. It is small enough applause that shall greet you here; but it is something to look forward to the Master's smile, and to toil meanwhile amidst a shade which is still light enough to read the motto—

I live for all who love me,
For all who know me true,
For the heaven that shines above me,
For the good that I can do.

(Mr. Murrell resumed his seat amidst loud and continued applause.)

The Rev. W. O. SIMPSON seconded the resolution, which was supported by the Rev. C. S. ADAMA VAN SCHELTEMA, of Amsterdam, and carried. On the motion of Mr. GROSER, seconded by Mr. HARTLEY, a vote of thanks was presented to Lord Shaftesbury and Mr. Reed for presiding on the occasion.

RAGGED SCHOOL UNION.—On Monday night the Earl of Shaftesbury, K.G., presided at twenty-eighth annual meeting of the Ragged School Union at Exeter Hall. In reading an abstract of the report, Mr. W. Locke, the vice-president of the society, stated that there were 180 school buildings in which 255 Sunday afternoon and evening schools were carried on with an average attendance of 30,125 scholars; 176 day-schools, with an average attendance of 20,157 (the number on the register being 27,795); and 176 night-schools, with an average attendance of 7,412 (the number on the register being 11,444). There were 1,343 members on the fifty-four senior Bible-classes. In forty-three places religious services adapted for children were performed. These

children's churches, with an average congregation of 79 little worshippers, required the attendance of only two teachers—one to officiate and the other to keep order. In 74 schools there were adult mission services. Infants' nurseries had been established in connection with two ragged-schools; in the nursery in Kent-street during the past nine years 1,000 babies had been admitted and taken care of, at a charge of 1*d*. per day each, while 1,944 babies had been admitted to the nursery in Paddington during the last year. Labourers' clubs, or reading rooms, besides provident, coal, sick, burial, barrow, and donkey-clubs were now connected with fourteen of the ragged-schools. In 102 of the schools penny savings-banks had been started, and in some deposits as low as one farthing were received. In the previous year 12,864*l*. was deposited in these 102 penny banks by 31,799 depositors. Of this sum 1,898*l*. remained to their credit at Christmas. The growth of the shoe black brigades had been remarkable. The Central Brigade was formed in 1851. During the first year only 32 boys were employed, whose united earnings were 650*l*. Last year, however, 362 boys were employed by the eight societies now in existence. The united earnings of the lads amounted to 11,003*l*., and at Christmas they had 785*l*. in the banks. The receipts of the society for the year, including the balance, were 8,023*l*.; the expenditure was 7,504*l*. The Rev. A. M'ANALAN moved, and the Rev. Dr. Tyng, of New York, seconded, the adoption of the report. The Rev. Dr. Nolan moved, and Mr. J. M. M'DIARMID, of Liverpool, seconded, the following resolution, which was carried unanimously:—"That this meeting considers that the prospect of national education becoming more and more secular in its tone implies the obligation that the committee will not only continue but extend their social and missionary operations." The Rev. R. J. SIMPSON, seconded by Mr. R. H. KILLICK, moved that the thanks of the meeting were due to the president of the society (Lord Shaftesbury) for his lifelong labours for the temporal and eternal welfare of the destitute and neglected classes. During the evening the chairman announced that he had received a donation of 20*l*. from Lord Fortescue. The Doxology having been sung by the assembly, and a benediction pronounced by the Rev. B. Cassin, the proceedings terminated.

PRESBYTERIAN MISSION TO CHINA.—The annual meeting of the friends of the above mission in connection with the Presbyterian Church in England was held on Wednesday evening at Exeter Hall; the Earl of Cavan in the chair. Mr. H. M. MATHESON read the report, which stated that at the present time there were thirteen of the society's missionaries labouring in China, besides forty-one native evangelists and fourteen students. The districts occupied were Amoy, Swatow, and Formosa. During the past year 380 new members had been received, making the total number of church members 1,367, and those professing Christian community about 6,000. The report then went on to detail the operations of the mission, which had been most encouraging. The annual expenditure of the mission was about 8,000*l*., but it was estimated that owing to the extensive operations in the district of Formosa about 10,000*l*. would be required for the current year. The Indian mission was in full working order, and the station at Bengal had produced much good under the guidance of a native missionary. The chairman having addressed the meeting in support of the mission, the meeting was subsequently addressed by the Rev. Carstairs Douglas, who spoke chiefly on Chinese colonisation in the Eastern Archipelago. Thousands were every year leaving Amoy for those regions, and he trusted that before many years were past they would hear of glorious results about work done at Singapore and other places amongst the Chinese. In a few weeks he intended to return to China, and he would commend the cause to their prayers, sympathy, and increased liberality. Dr. James L. Maxwell addressed the meeting at some length, in a subsequent stage, on the nature of the work carried on Tai-wan-foo, Formosa, and also at the other stations in that island. He said that there were two great instrumentalities which had been honoured of God for promoting the mission cause there. The first of these was the simple preaching of the Word of God in the chapel, on the street, or in the village; and the second was the healing of the sick and the evangelistic work carried on in the mission hospital or dispensary. The other speakers were the Rev. Adolph Saphir, Mr. Brownlow North, Rev. Dr. Mackay, of Hull, Dr. Davis, of the Religious Tract Society, and Rev. Dr. Fraser. Their addresses were of a practical character, and commended in the strongest terms to the sympathy and support of the Christian public missions such as those carried on by the English Presbyterian Church in China.

The Rev. G. W. SWANN, late of Keswick, has accepted a unanimous invitation to the pastorate of the united churches at Boldon and Tyne Docks, in the county of Durham.

The Rev. J. C. JONES, of Offord-road Chapel, has signified his acceptance of the unanimous call he lately received from the church and congregation of Bedford Chapel, Charrington-street, Oakley-square.

The Rev. L. Llewellyn, who for the last five years and a half has been associated in the ministry with the Rev. J. H. Millard, B.A., of Huntingdon, has accepted the unanimous invitation of the church meeting in Harvey-lane, Leicester, to become its pastor. He will enter upon his new duties the first Sunday in June.

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